

Eradicating Poverty and Discrimination

Chapter IV describes what Canada has done to help eradicate poverty and discrimination.

Canada has legislation aimed at eliminating discrimination and violence against women and guaranteeing the rights of children, and the Government of Canada promotes various initiatives to improve the health and well-being of women and children. Multilaterally, Canada works actively at the United Nations and the OAS toward the elimination of violence against women and children, and through the International Labour Organization to support non-discrimination in employment and the elimination of child exploitation.

Since 1988, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Gender Equality Funds have supported international commitments made in the areas of poverty reduction, political participation, economic empowerment, violence, health and education, in the Americas. These funds have improved the living conditions of rural women; supported domestic violence programs; increased the political participation of women; helped train police and judicial officials; and provided health care and safe houses for victims of domestic violence.

Chapter IV highlights ways in which Canada's Official Development Assistance Program supports developing countries in order to reduce poverty and contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world. Canada is responding to the development challenge in the Americas by supporting programs and projects that flow from the Miami and Santiago plans of action. Canadian activities aim to promote a politically stable, economically liberal and socially equitable region, free of environmental degradation. More recently the challenge has included humanitarian relief efforts around natural disasters — such as hurricanes Mitch and Georges and El Niño.

Since 1995, the Government of Canada has been reviewing its approach to addressing small business issues and concerns. In response to changes in the economic environment due to new information technologies, connectedness and an opening of trade, Canada has moved toward creating conditions that are supportive of employment-generating private sector growth. As a result, the Government of Canada relies on a wide range of policy levers, developed and implemented by a number of departments and agencies, to facilitate and encourage small business growth and development. Central to this approach is the recognition of the vital role that small businesses play in the Canadian economy.

In the Hemisphere, the Government of Canada has invested more than US\$400 million to provide training, technical assistance and business development opportunities for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in the Americas. These programs enhance the capacity of businesses, strengthen social and economic infrastructures, and ensure better quality production and products. The goal is to encourage the development of successful enterprises, which in turn helps to increase incomes for employees and employers.